

[9th November 1957]

THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN : ஓரளவு பணம் பற்றுக் குறையினால் வேலையில்லாமல் இருக்கிறது என்பது உண்மைதான். இருப்பினும் பெரிய பகுதிகள் தறிகள் வேலையில்லாமல் இருக்கின்றன என்ற புகார் சர்க்காரிடத்தில் இல்லை.

SRI T. T. DANIEL : Sir, may I know from the Hon. Minister whether the Cess Fund, which ought to have been distributed to the weavers of Kanyakumari district on 1st November 1956 by the erstwhile T.C. Government was handed over to our Government and if so whether it has been distributed to the weavers ?

THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN : I would like the hon. Member to put a separate question, Sir.

SRI M. P. SUBRAMANIAM : கைத்தறி நெசவாளர்கள் கூட்டுறவு சங்கத்தில் பதிவு செய்து கொள்வதற்கு ஜில்லா கூட்டுறவு மத்திய பாங்க் அனுமதி கொடுத்தால்தான் சேர்த்துக் கொள்ளப்படும் என்று டெப்யூடி ரெஜிஸ்ட்ரார் சொல்லுவது உண்மையா? இவ்விதம் மத்திய பாங்கின் விருப்பு வெறுப்புகளால் பல கூட்டுறவு சங்கங்கள் பதிவு செய்யப் படாமல் இருப்பது அரசாங்கத்திற்குத் தெரியுமா?

THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN : என்னிடத்தில் அந்த தகவல் இல்லை. கனம் மெம்பர் அவர்கள் இதைப்பற்றி தகவல் கொடுத்தால் டெப்யூடி ரெஜிஸ்ட்ராரிடத்தில் கொடுத்து விசாரிக்க சொல்லுகிறேன்.

SRI N. K. PALANISAMI : ஸார், நெசவாளர்களுக்கு கடன் கொடுப்பது அர்பன் பாங்குகளின் மூலம் சரியாக கொடுக்கப்படவில்லை என்பது மந்திரி அவர்களுக்கு தெரியுமா?

THE HON. SRI R. VENKATARAMAN : சென்ட்ரல் பாங்க் மூலம் சரியாக கொடுக்கப்பட்டு வருகிறது என்று தெரிகிறது.

MR. SPEAKER : Questions are over.

[Note.—An asterisk (*) at the commencement of a speech indicates revision by the Member.]

II.—(1) RULING RE ANSWERING OF QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD.

MR. SPEAKER : A question has been answered yesterday about the functions of the State Electricity Board and the extent of Government responsibility in regard to the purchase of spare parts and other machinery required for the Electricity Department.

The Government have stated that the main function of the Madras State Electricity Board will be the promotion of the co-ordinated development of the generation, supply and distribution of electricity within the State in the most efficient and economical manner with particular reference to such development in areas not for the time being served or adequately served by any licensee and that the Government have got over-all policy control over the Electricity Board and that they have got no responsibility in regard to the purchase of spare parts or other machinery required for the Electricity Department made by the Electricity Board and the Officers authorized in this behalf by the Board.

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This gives rise to the question as to how far the Government will be responsible to the Legislature in such matters.

Under Rule 30 of the Madras Assembly Rules, a question must relatè to public affairs with which the Minister to whom it is addressed is officially connected or to a matter of administration over which he is officially responsible. Ministers are not, therefore, answerable to the Legislature for matters not under their control or direction or which the Legislature has delegated to other bodies. But in all such undertakings, the finances are provided by the public exchequer and in this view, the Legislature is entitled to know not only about the finances but everything relating to the management and administration of such undertakings. But this does not mean that when there is a separate statute and statutory authority for doing that specific work, detailed questions of every type should be allowed. It would therefore be a wholesome principle not to interfere with the autonomy of such authorities and questions will be justified, if there is something to be urged or to be known. Asking questions cannot be construed as interfering with the autonomy of these authorities.

The difficult question, as the Speaker of the Lok Sabha said on April 8th, 1950, in a similar situation in Delhi, is "the question of maintaining the balance between the authority of this House and the freedom or internal autonomy of the institutions which have been granted that autonomy. I do not mean to maintain the proposition that this House cannot interfere with certain details. It has got the right. Then, for the purpose of exercising their jurisdiction we must have the balance as to how far we should interfere with the autonomy of these bodies. That is the principal point to be borne in mind.

There was a full-dress debate on the Parliamentary control of Public Corporation, in the Lok Sabha on the 10th and 11th of December 1953, and the Hon. Minister for Finance said, in the course of his reply, "No limit, we find, exists in practice over the absolute right of Parliament to ask questions and to elicit information." The eligibility of questions in regard to the Electricity Board will, therefore, depend upon the nature of the statute and the powers that the Minister has got under the statute.

Under section 61 of the Act, the Board submits to the State Government a statement in the prescribed form of the estimated capital and revenue receipts and expenditure for the ensuing year and the State Government shall cause it to be laid on the table of both Chambers of the Legislature. The statement shall be open to discussion therein, but shall not be subject to vote. If the Budget comes before the Legislature, it cannot be maintained that no questions can be put about this Board. The question also arises as to how a Member can criticise or know anything about the Board unless he puts questions and gets information required for the purpose of debate. There are some Members who know some details or something about the business and if they find that

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obviously something is going wrong in the day-to-day administration, they may put questions and it would be wrong to disallow such questions on the ground that there should be no interference with the autonomy of these undertakings.

In Bombay, questions on matters within the jurisdiction of the Board regarding supply of electricity to any particular part, revision of rates of electricity and other matters relating thereto are admitted on the ground that the Members of the Board are appointed by the Government and that the Government are in a way responsible for the affairs of the Board.

In West Bengal also, questions relating to the Electricity Board on matters like the administration of the Board, rate of consumption of electricity, etc., have been admitted.

The right of interpellation is a very important right and one of the means by which Members can get information or ventilate grievances on behalf of their constituencies about the nationalised industries. I, therefore, feel that such questions are admissible, though they relate to matters pertaining to the day-to-day administration of the Electricity Board, if the matters are of sufficient public importance. It is, however, left to the Minister to answer them or not. As per rules, I cannot compel him to answer. I am also told that in the Lok Sabha not only questions are allowed, but even half-hour debates are allowed on matters pertaining to Corporations, which are formed under the auspices of the Government. I, therefore, feel that these questions are admissible and that, in all fairness, the Government will answer them.

III.—PRESENTATION OF THE SIXTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

SRI K. R. VISWANATHAN: I, the Chairman of the Committee on Estimates, having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on its behalf, present the Sixth Report of the Committee on Estimates on the Public Works Department (Buildings). ^a

IV.—GOVERNMENT BILL.

THE MADRAS VILLAGE PANCHAYATS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1957
(L.A. BILL NO. 16 OF 1957).

THE HON. SRI M. BHAKTAVATSALAM: Sir, I move—

“ That the Madras Village Panchayats (Amendment) Bill, 1957 (L.A. Bill No. 16 of 1957), as amended by the Select Committee, be taken into consideration.”

^a Laid on the table of the House.